

Strengthening Child Marriage Prevention Policy Strategies in the Implementation of Development Planning

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
First keyword; children, marriage, Second keyword; protection, Third keyword: violence, rights, teenagers	<i>Child marriage is a form of child abuse with multifaceted impacts. The child marriage rate was included as a development target in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and was achieved in 2024. This target is supported by various cross-sectoral efforts at both the national and regional levels. However, challenges remain, such as unregistered child marriages, teenage births, and a suboptimal referral system for child victims and integrated data. In the next planning document, the 2025-2029 RPJMN, the child marriage rate remains a priority indicator, necessitating a re-sharpening of the strategy to ensure that efforts are not only quantitative but also qualitative, ensuring that every child's rights are met. This policy brief is designed to provide recommendations for alternative policies to strengthen child marriage prevention efforts through a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis to illustrate achievements and identify challenges, systematic analysis to generate policy alternatives, and assessment of priority policy alternatives using five decision-making and public policy criteria. The evaluation results indicate strengthening norms in various regulations, a clear role structure between stakeholders, and collaborative processes at both the national and regional levels. To address future challenges, transformation is needed by expanding the scope of policy from prevention to prevention and management of child marriage. Four alternative strategies were identified: strengthening asymmetric policies tailored to regional characteristics, enhancing reproductive health education to increase adolescent resilience and raise awareness in the immediate environment, strengthening referral services for victims of child marriage, and improving the integrated data system.</i>

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INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is a form of violence that places a person under the power of forced marriage and can be subject to criminal penalties (Azisa et al., 2023). Child marriage can be caused by various factors such as culture, lifestyle, the child's level of knowledge about reproductive health, and even family economic factors (Pourtaheri, Mahdizadeh, Tehrani, Jamali, & Peyman, 2024). At the societal level, child marriage is not only viewed as an individual matter but also involves larger social entities such as the family and community (Nasution AF, 2024). Some communities perpetuate child marriage because it is seen as a way to maintain social honor, reduce the family's economic burden, and provide protection for their daughters (Abera, Nega, Tefera, & Gelagay, 2020). Knowledge of reproductive health is also a contributing factor to child marriage, especially when it begins with unwanted pregnancies resulting from risky adolescent relationships (Sychareun et al., 2018). Currently, early

adolescent puberty occurs at a younger age, so mental maturity is not yet followed, often triggering premarital sexual relations in adolescence (Sekarayu, 2021).

Child marriage can have various negative impacts, especially for the children who experience it (Parsons et al., 2015). From a health perspective, pregnancy at a very young age can increase the risk of maternal death and the birth of children with low birth weight due to malnutrition (Luyckx & Brenner, 2015). Based on the analysis of 2017 Susenas data, babies weighing less than 2.5 kg are more often born to children (<18 years) compared to adult women (18+) (Puskapa, 2020). Furthermore, the cycle of poverty will continue, especially if married children cannot continue their education and remain dependents of their families (Adjei, 2015). The unprepared mentality of child marriage partners also contributes to the risk of violence that can trigger trauma for adolescent girls.

As a form of violence against children, child marriage is not caused by a single factor. Based on the socioecological framework, the WHO defines interpersonal violence as occurring at four levels: individual, relationships with close relatives, community, and wider society (WHO, 2005). Therefore, interventions must be able to target problems at each level. Based on this, the Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency (KemenPPN/Bappenas) initiated the issuance of the *National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (Stranas PPA)* in 2020 together with various development partners, related Ministries/Institutions, and Non-Governmental Organizations working on gender equality and child protection issues. *Stranas PPA* serves as a reference for cross-sectoral collaboration in efforts to reduce child marriage rates, focusing on strengthening children's resilience, ensuring a supportive environment and service system for children, and strengthening regulations and coordination among stakeholders in preventing child marriage.

Various regulatory enhancements have been implemented to systematically strengthen the prevention of child marriage (Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021). This began with the issuance of Law No. 16 concerning Amendments to Law No. 1 of concerning Marriage, which increased the minimum age for marriage for women from 16 to 19. This was followed by the issuance of Supreme Court Regulation No. 5 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Adjudicating Applications for Dispensation, which stipulates that marriages under the age of 19 can only be conducted with dispensation approval through a court decision.

Indonesia's commitment to reducing child marriage is evident in the child marriage indicator in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 5 and the National Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMN) 2020-2024 and 2025-2029. The child marriage rate, as outlined in the proportion of women aged 20-24 who married before 18, is targeted to decline to 5.03 percent in 2029 and 4.23 percent in 2030.

According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data, the child marriage rate has been declining year after year. Throughout the 2020-2024 RPJMN (National Medium-Term Development Plan), there was a significant decline, from 10.82% in 2019 to around 5.9% in 2024, as seen in the following graph.

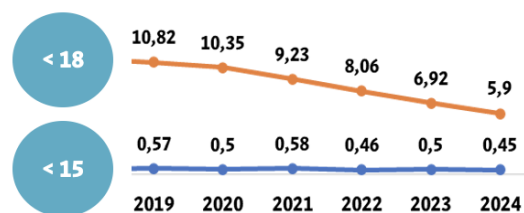


Figure 1. Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who married before 18 years and 15 years from 2019 - 2024

Source: Susenas, BPS various years

The sharp decline in child marriage rates demonstrates that the various cross-sectoral efforts undertaken within the framework of the National Strategy for Women and Child Protection (Stranas PPA) have had a significant impact. However, child marriage is not fully captured in this survey's figures. Child marriage can still occur through marriage dispensations from the courts or through unregistered marriages. In 2024, there were approximately 32,531 applications for marriage dispensations from Muslims under 19 years of age, with 68.6% (29,480) of these applications granted (Supreme Court, 2024). Furthermore, over the past four years, the birth rate among adolescents aged 15-19 has fluctuated, as illustrated by the following Aged Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR) indicator.

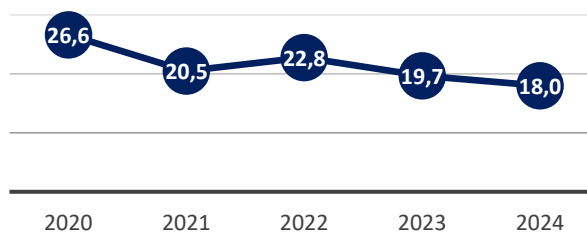


Figure 2. Age- specific fertility rate (ASFR) for those aged 15-19 years in Indonesia
Source: SP- Long Form 2020, BPS and Family Data Collection 2021-2024, BKKBN.

The graph above shows that in 2024, there will be approximately 18 live births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. This is consistent with data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI), which showed that approximately 64.4% of women aged 10-19 have been pregnant. The continued decline in child marriage rates does not provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of child marriage. Unregistered child marriage and teenage pregnancy remain challenges going forward.

This research aims to propose strengthened child marriage prevention policy strategies to address persistent challenges in implementation. The research benefit lies in providing evidence-based recommendations for the 2025–2029 RPJMN priorities, ensuring that child marriage prevention remains a national development focus. The policy implication emphasizes the integration of asymmetric regional policy models and comprehensive data systems to address geographical disparities and improve intervention effectiveness across Indonesia's diverse socio-cultural contexts.

METHOD

This research used policy analysis and planning methods intended for policymakers to obtain alternative perspectives for quicker decision-making. Policy analysis included several criteria: (1) determining a specific issue; (2) evaluation; (3) preparing a working paper or draft regulation; (4) targeting specific actors as policymakers; (5) providing alternative explanations of the problem; (6) describing the implementation timeline; and (7) employing a political approach to problem-solving.

The first step involved analyzing issues related to child marriage prevention using qualitative methods through descriptive analysis of various aspects such as regulations and policies (norms), stakeholders involved (structure), and evaluation of policy implementation to date (process). The data used were secondary data from various sources, including development planning documents, program implementation reports from relevant ministries/agencies, as well as survey data and studies related to child protection and child marriage compiled by development partners, academic journals, or other thematic discussions.

The second step identified alternative policies to strengthen efforts to prevent child marriage in the future, based on the analysis and evaluation results. The third step assessed alternative policies, focusing on future actions with realistic and implementable options. This step included an analysis of priority policy decision-making based on criteria such as: (1) legality; (2) political acceptability; (3) feasibility for improvement; and (4) administrative implementation with involvement of key stakeholders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Reflection on the implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage

The National Strategy for Child Marriage Prevention was launched in 2020, involving various ministries and agencies and supported by development partners through collaborative programs with UNICEF, UNFPA, and the Australian government (MAMPU and AIPJ2 programs). This strategy aims to provide cross-sectoral guidance for comprehensive child marriage prevention efforts. Comprehensive interventions from all perspectives are necessary because the causes of child marriage are multidimensional.

Optimizing children's capacity

Children are primary stakeholders in child marriage prevention efforts (Yuliani, Humsona, Wahyunengseh, Haryani, & Lutfia, 2022). In this regard, children need to recognize and be able to protect themselves. This strategy involves interventions to increase children's capacity through various learning activities related to reproductive health, both integrated into classroom learning and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, adolescent education is also service-based through youth health centers (Puskesmas) and youth integrated health posts (Posyandu). To support the success of this strategy, numerous collaborative efforts have been undertaken by various development partners and community organizations. Provision of life skills education and child marriage prevention campaigns involving children are among the programs implemented at the village level.

In addition to providing understanding and life skills, children are also encouraged to become agents of change. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) carries out the Children's Forum program as Pioneers and Reporters (PermenPPA No. 3/2025). In this case, the role as Pioneers is intended for children to provide role models in efforts to fulfill and protect children, including preventing child marriage. Meanwhile, the role of children as Reporters has two main objectives: children can report problems in the field to the guardian for follow-up by the nearest service unit; and children can have a voice in development planning forums to emphasize the importance of the issue of fulfilling children's rights and protection, including related to the prevention of child marriage.

Strengthening children's capacities is also carried out through the Adolescent Family Life Preparation Program (PKBR), initiated by the Ministry of Population and Family Development/National Population and Family Planning Agency (Kemendukbangga/BKKBN). Implemented through the establishment of Youth Information and Counseling Centers (PIK R) groups, this program provides educational space for adolescents aged 10 to 24. One of the tools used is the 'About Us' module, which contains reproductive health education and is delivered through a *peer-to-peer approach*. This approach is considered more effective because adolescents can more freely share their stories. The 'About Us' module is designed into three segments: 10-14 years, 15-19 years, and 20-24 years. Currently, approximately 9,720 PIK R groups have been established across 38 provinces in Indonesia (SIGA-Kemendukbangga, 2025). However, improvements are still needed in the monitoring and follow-up process of this program (Saiful and Ode, 2024).

Environment that supports the prevention of child marriage

Families and communities play a crucial role in preventing child marriage. One of the contributing factors to child marriage is rooted in societal values and norms. Furthermore, poverty is also a factor driving children into marriage to pay off debts or reduce family burdens. As immature individuals, children lack the power to refuse when their families decide to marry them off.

Family strengthening is carried out through the Youth Family Development (BKR) program, which establishes activity groups for parents with adolescent children. In this program, parents are provided with an understanding of women's rights, reproductive health, and the dangers of child marriage. The hope is that parents can provide nurturing and develop appropriate communication patterns for their adolescent children to prevent various risky adolescent behaviors. The Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) movement and community leaders are also involved with the aim of building a collective commitment to reducing child marriage cases (Hapsari and Manggalou, 2025).

Societal norms and traditions are among the causes of child marriage. In some areas, such as Lombok, the tradition of "*merariq*" is used as a justification for child marriage. This is due to a shallow cultural interpretation of the true meaning of these customs (Azizi, 2025). In this regard, family and community understanding is key to preventing traditional practices from being used as justification for customary marriages.

On the other hand, a religious narrative has been developed that provides a comprehensive perspective on the importance of preventing child marriage. In an Islamic context, marriage readiness is not only determined by a child's *puberty*, but also by their readiness and life skills (RumahKitaB, 2020). In this regard, community education can also be conducted through various religious activities, such as sermons, religious studies, and so on. The presence of influential and respected figures encourages effective communication, especially within communities with strong traditional and religious values.

Accessibility and expansion of services

This strategy focuses on providing access to services both before and after a child marriage occurs. Interventions in the pre-marital phase are intended to prevent child marriage cases from occurring. Interventions after a child marriage occur aim to ensure that child victims of child marriage continue to receive their rights.

Service interventions before child marriage occur are related to reducing the risk of causes such as school dropout rates and family economic levels. Research in a village in East Lombok shows that one of the main causes of child marriage is low levels of education, with the average perpetrator of child marriage only having a junior high school education (Indriani et al., 2025). Efforts to address school dropouts have been carried out through the Out-of-School Children Program (PATs), which provides assistance so children can complete 12 years of compulsory education. Furthermore, opportunities for continuing higher education have been opened through assistance and scholarships. For married children, the fulfillment of their right to education becomes more vulnerable. The option of pursuing a learning package is one solution that can be taken to ensure they do not drop out of school.

Services are provided not only at the individual level but also at the family level. Poor family economic conditions often trigger parents to marry off their children, hoping to relieve the burden and hope their children will contribute to the family's financial situation (Widyawati, Wahyunu, and Lestari, 2023). Therefore, efforts are needed to improve family finances. The

Family Hope Program (PKH) provides conditional social assistance to poor and vulnerable families. One of the program's targets is school-age children, aged 6-21, who have not completed primary or secondary education (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2021).

The impact of child marriage on quality of life and health is significant, including the risk of pregnancy and childbirth complications, stillbirth and miscarriage, mental health and sexual violence, as well as school dropout and poverty (Ma'rifah and Muhaimin, 2019). To date, there is no specific mechanism to support victims of child marriage. In terms of education, various options have been provided for children to remain in school, including through the provision of catch-up programs for packages A, B, and C. Contraceptive and reproductive health services have also been provided at health care facilities (Fasyankes). However, many children remain reluctant to access these services.

Strengthening regulations and institutions

Various regulations have been issued to prevent child marriage. Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage was issued with the intention of increasing the legal age for marriage for girls from 16 to 19. Article 7 paragraphs 2 and 3 of the law also state that proposals for marriage under 19 can only be implemented through a dispensation process. More technically, Supreme Court Regulation (PerMA) No. 5 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Adjudicating Marriage Dispensation Applications has been issued. This regulation was designed to provide efforts to prevent child marriage by requiring that certain requirements be met, including considering the interests of the child. However, in practice, many child marriages still escape the court process. Furthermore, Law No. 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence (TPKS) was issued, where Article 10 states that forced marriage, including child marriage, can be subject to criminal sanctions or a fine of up to 200 million rupiah. However, until now there have been no technical provisions regarding the implementation of this criminal punishment.

Collaborative efforts to prevent child marriage have been carried out quite extensively since 2019, so that the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas together with related Ministries/Institutions and various non-governmental stakeholders initiated the publication of the National Strategy for PPA in 2020. This effort became the starting point for the emergence of various collaborative actions both at the national and regional levels. To assist local governments in implementing child marriage prevention strategies, the Ministry of PPPA together with various development partners have compiled a Practical Guide for the Implementation of the National Strategy for PPA. This guide provides practical steps for Provincial and Regency/City Governments in developing Regional Strategies for Child Marriage Prevention by adopting the stages contained in the National Strategy for PPA, namely: (1) mapping regional conditions; (2) building joint commitment; (3) planning and budgeting; (4) implementation; and (5) monitoring, supervision, and evaluation of PPA prevention efforts.

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) has also encouraged the establishment of regional government integrity pacts to reduce child marriage rates. To date, many provinces and regencies/cities have regulations related to child marriage prevention. To encourage regulatory and institutional strengthening, child marriage is also included in the Ministry's biennial Child-Friendly Regency/City assessment.

Strengthening stakeholder coordination

The multi-sectoral causes of child marriage require comprehensive, cross-sectoral prevention efforts to ensure all aspects are addressed. Therefore, strengthening coordination between stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental institutions, is essential. With

the National Strategy for Women and Children (Stranas PPA), child marriage prevention efforts are carried out collaboratively and comprehensively, starting at the individual child level, through the family, community, school, and even the state level. The development of these five strategies is based on an analysis of the causes of the problem and potential interventions deemed capable of reducing the risk of child marriage.

At the national level, efforts have been made to strengthen regulations, supported by various community-based alliances working in the areas of child protection and gender equality. Furthermore, various development partners, such as UNICEF, UNFPA, INKLUSI, and AIPJ2, have also supported the development of technical guidelines to assist local governments in developing their strategies to reduce child marriage. Support for these regions is provided by various community organizations at both the national and local levels, such as Aisyiyah, Lakpesdam NU, BaKTI, PLAN, and others.

To encourage massive collaborative efforts, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) also launched the Joint Movement to Prevent Child Marriage (GEBER PPA) at the community level through a joint campaign on the dangers of child marriage. This movement involves various community organizations through activities such as developing a study on the maturation of child marriage and a pocket book on reproductive health from a religious perspective, campaigning to stop child marriage, developing various communication channels such as short films and *podcasts*, and collaborating on educational programs in schools (KemenPPPA, 2023).

Integrated monitoring is carried out jointly by the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture (PMK), the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA), and various development partners to identify progress and obstacles faced in the implementation of StranasPPA.

Analysis of Problems and Challenges

In line with strengthening efforts to prevent child marriage, there has been a significant decline in the national child marriage rate. In 2024, child marriage data had reached 5.90% nationally. However, when viewed across provinces, disparities still exist. Based on the results of the BPS survey, in 2024 there were five provinces that experienced an increase in child marriage rates, namely: (1) Riau Islands; (2) Jambi; (3) Riau; (4) South Sulawesi; and (5) Central Sulawesi (BPS, 2024), as shown in the following figure.

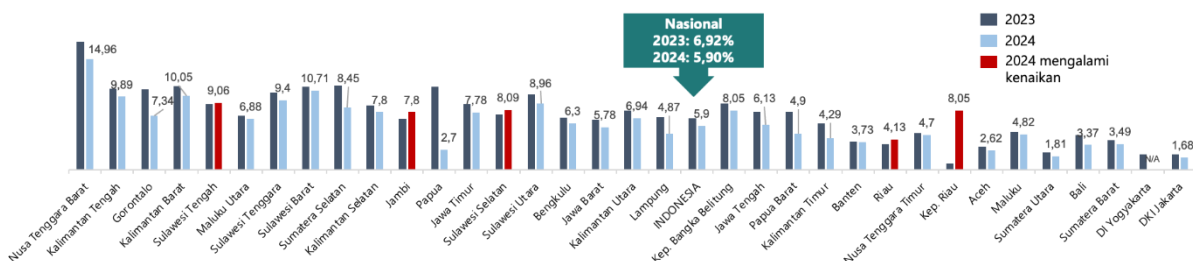


Figure 5. Proportion of Women Aged 20-24 Years Who Were Married or Living Together Before Age 18 Years by Province (Percent)

Source: BPS, 2025

Until now, child marriage rates have been calculated through a BPS survey, so this decline doesn't accurately reflect the actual situation on the ground. When compared with adolescent birth rates at the provincial level, several provinces show discrepancies.

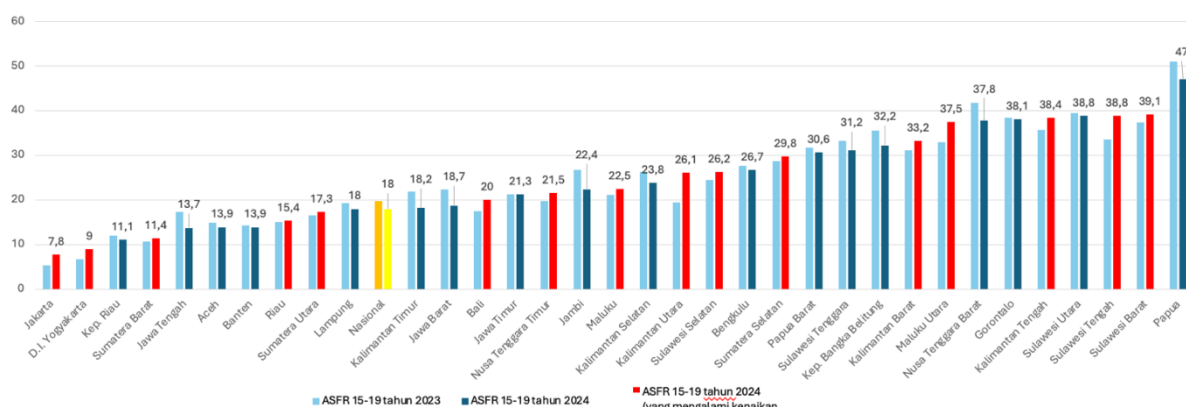


Figure 6. ASFR 15-19 Years 2023-2024

Source: SIGA Ministry of Education and Culture/BKKBN, 2025

The two figures above demonstrate a discrepancy between the declining trend in child marriage rates and the birth rate in the 15-19 age group. This phenomenon indicates that many child marriages remain unrecognized or unregistered. This represents a challenge that needs to be addressed. Although the trend of child marriage continues to decline, adolescent births will increase in 16 provinces by 2024. A shift in perspective is needed to achieve child marriage targets. Focus should no longer be solely on numbers, but also on the quality of services and interventions.

Child protection aspects must be applied comprehensively in efforts to prevent child marriage, necessitating a shift in strategic approaches that focus not only on prevention but also on addressing the issues of children forced into marriage. Fulfilling children's rights, while considering the principles of non-discrimination and the child's best interests, must be the foundation for providing referral services for child victims of child marriage.

Given the large number of unregistered child marriage cases, integrated data collection is crucial. Not only achievement data but also the strengthening of baseline data for program implementation are essential. Micro-data collection at the village level to identify married or pregnant children is essential as a reference for implementing interventions and referral services. This is crucial to ensure the fulfillment of children's rights, such as the right to continue their education, reproductive health services, and support during pregnancy and childbirth.

Currently, there is no follow-up mechanism after the issuance of a marriage dispensation for children. After child marriage, the child's survival is left entirely to the family. Often, children experience violence triggered by their partner's power relations or their own unpreparedness for life after marriage. The decision to drop out of school is often the choice, especially if the child marriage is caused by an unwanted pregnancy. This can lead to the risk of intergenerational poverty. The significant impact of child marriage on child welfare requires a comprehensive approach, involving various sectors.

However, societal misconceptions and traditions remain the root causes of child marriage in certain regions. Addressing this issue cannot be done in the short term. Changes in mindset and behavior must begin at the fundamental level. Therefore, the involvement of influential actors within these community groups is essential. Each group has distinct characteristics, leading to diverse dominant actors and potential *focal points* for preventing and addressing child marriage, including religious leaders, community leaders, regional heads, and others. In this

regard, it is crucial for regions to assess the potential to support child marriage prevention and intervention efforts, tailored to their local conditions.

In terms of norms, many regulations have been passed to support efforts to reduce the number of child marriages in Indonesia, both at the national and regional levels. Various technical policies have been developed to complement regulations such as the National Strategy for Women and Children Protection and their technical implementation guidelines. Several regulations and innovations have emerged in the regions to reduce child marriages at the village and district/city levels by adapting to their respective local values. Based on the structural aspect, there has been a division of roles in efforts to prevent child marriage. Ministries/Institutions have a specific mandate to reduce child marriage indicators nationally. The Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas has integrated child protection issues and indicators for reducing child marriage as part of the priority program in the national planning document. In the process, cross-sectoral efforts have been seen both at the *grassroots level* and in efforts to improve policies at the national level. Movements involving children and communities have emerged at the regional level to campaign against child marriage. However, many challenges remain that require attention going forward, including: (1) Disparities in child marriage rates between provinces indicate differences in the characteristics of the problem; (2) The high birth rate in the 15-19 age group indicates that many child marriages remain unregistered; (3) The referral system for child victims of child marriage has not been properly regulated so that the fulfillment of children's rights after the marriage is determined is at risk of not being fulfilled; (4) The monitoring and evaluation system and supervision of efforts to prevent child marriage have not been established effectively; and (5) There is no data integration either as a basis for program implementation or data on development achievements.

Analysis of Opportunities and Potential for Policy Strengthening

In addition to the problems and challenges that arise in the implementation of child marriage prevention policies, opportunities and potential need to be identified to strengthen future policies. Based on lessons learned from implementing efforts to reduce child marriage rates, several potential areas and opportunities can be used as modalities for future improvement.

Since the initial development of child marriage prevention policies, cross-sectoral involvement has been key. This includes not only cross-ministerial and institutional involvement but also active participation from non-governmental organizations, including development partners. The National Strategy for Women and Children (Stranas PPA) provides significant collaborative space for the involvement of non-governmental organizations. This presents the potential for expanding the scope of program implementation in the future. For sustainability, it is necessary to ensure that every program initiated by community organizations and development partners aligns with the government's development direction at both the national and regional levels. The involvement of multiple sectors also provides a strong impetus for advocacy efforts for relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, various collective actions within the community encourage increased understanding of the harmful impacts of child marriage.

The involvement of community and religious leaders significantly supports efforts to increase understanding and change behavior in groups with specific characteristics. Positively constructed religious and cultural narratives can provide appropriate education regarding the importance of preventing child marriage. This is crucial in addressing various interpretations that perpetuate the tradition of child marriage in the name of religion and culture. The involvement of community and religious leaders is intended to build *trust* and facilitate community acceptance.

Numerous government programs and services are considered to offer opportunities to strengthen mechanisms for handling victims of child marriage. Some key services include marriage dispensation, marriage guidance, population administration, Family Learning Centers (Puspaga), the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for the Protection of Women and Children (UPTD PPA), the Women's and Children's Empowerment Agency (BKR) and the Child Protection and Rehabilitation Center (PIK-R), the Family Welfare Service (Satyagatra), children's forums, and others (KemenPPN/Bappenas, 2024). These services can be optimized to establish a referral system for child victims of child marriage.

In general, the opportunities and potential for developing policies for preventing and addressing child marriage are evident in the norms outlined in various regulations and policies, including the National Strategy for Women and Children (Stranas PPA). The institutional structure and mandate of Ministries/Institutions tasked with reproductive health services, special education to prevent children from dropping out of school, services for victims of violence, and counseling and mentoring can be seen as opportunities to strengthen prevention and referral systems to support child victims of marriage. The process of implementing child marriage prevention policies across sectors can strengthen shared commitment and foster collective action, both to improve understanding and change behavior, and to promote community-based prevention and response efforts.

Future Policy Alternatives

Based on the results of the analysis of achievements, problems, and opportunities in the implementation of child marriage prevention policies, transformative changes in policy are urgently needed. Several things that need to be considered are: (1) Handling child marriage cannot only be focused on quantitative achievements. In this case, the downward trend in child marriage cannot be used as a measure of the quality of handling within it; (2) Child marriage cannot be seen as a stand-alone problem, but as part of child protection where the fulfillment of children's rights at every stage needs to be considered (before marriage, the child marriage dispensation process, and after child marriage); and (3) the main focus of child marriage prevention needs to be expanded to prevent and handle child marriage. This is due to the need for children to be protected and have their rights fulfilled as victims of child marriage through a service referral system and assistance.

In carrying out these transformation efforts, several alternative policies need to be developed that can serve as recommendations for resolving the problem. The following are several alternative policies that need to be implemented to strengthen efforts to prevent and address child marriage, while taking into account aspects of protecting and fulfilling children's rights.

The first policy alternative: developing an asymmetric strategy based on the characteristics and socio-cultural conditions of each province. This is intended to address the issue of disparities in child marriage rates, which differ across provinces. In this alternative, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, as *the leading sector*, must map the achievements and *profile* of each region as a basis for developing distinct strategies. Furthermore, the mentoring and supervision process will be tailored to the needs of each regional category. This policy model will also impact the perspective of regional assessment, which will no longer *rank* regions but instead emphasize each region's efforts to improve.

The second policy alternative: strengthening reproductive health education through various channels (family, school, and community), taking into account children's characteristics and the conditions of their living environment. This policy is intended to respond to the high number of cases of teenage pregnancies and births. It is an extension of previous policies related

to optimizing children's capacity and resilience. Strengthening reproductive health education needs to be complemented by aspects of sexual health with the aim of providing children with the ability to prevent unwanted pregnancies during adolescence, which can lead to child marriage. The scope of this policy includes the provision of educational materials and delivery methods tailored to the different needs of various groups of children and adolescents. The material summarized in this reproductive and sexual health education must adapt to current conditions and the issues faced by the current generation of adolescents. The integration of reproductive and sexual health education into the school curriculum needs to be complemented by regulations that provide protection and limitations for teachers in conducting teaching, including for Special School (SLB) teachers who assist children with mental disabilities.

The third policy alternative: strengthening regulations related to the mandate for referral services for victims of child marriage. The numerous services from each Ministry/Institution that have the potential to be used to fulfill children's rights after marriage present an opportunity to improve the quality of future policy implementation. However, in the current implementation there is no specific mandate and system that regulates who is responsible for the referral mechanism needed by children in the phase after child marriage. In cases where a child is married and has not yet become pregnant, assistance from cadres and Family Planning Field Officers (PLKB) is needed to provide contraception to delay pregnancy in order to avoid high-risk pregnancies and maternal mortality. Conversely, if a child who has been married has become pregnant, health cadres and community health centers must be ready to provide services and assistance during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. Furthermore, assistance for the first 1,000 days of life for the newborn must be provided by local cadres and PLKB. The existence of these services is still separate, so strengthening regulations that regulate the mandate and integrated service mechanisms for child victims of child marriage is needed.

The fourth alternative: integrating child marriage data systems at all regional levels. This policy aims to improve the implementation of child marriage prevention and management policies through the provision of an integrated data system. The types of data covered can be divided into program data and output data. Program data is intended to serve as the basis for implementing program interventions. For example, in order to capture the phenomenon of unregistered child marriage through various data collection mechanisms that have been implemented, such as data on teenage pregnancies through: routine records at health facilities, the Electronic Ready for Marriage and Pregnancy (Elsimil) application, village data collection through the Rumah Dataku Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas (KampungKB) program, and data collection initiated through mentoring programs by other community organizations. What is then needed is how this data can be reported hierarchically from the village level to the district/city and provincial levels so that it can be referred to the services needed by the child. In this case, the data collection aspect needs to be expanded not only to pregnancy status, but also whether the teenager needs services to fulfill their right to education or other assistance such as economic, legal, and so on. Meanwhile, output data is related to the reflection of the program's success measures. Currently, there is no integrated data regarding marriage dispensations from religious courts and general courts, making it difficult to see the actual number of dispensations applied for in the context of child marriage.

The next step is to assess the four alternative policies to be able to develop priorities for child marriage prevention and handling policies in the future. Determining these criteria involves six experts from key Ministries/Institutions involved in the implementation of child marriage prevention and management policies, namely: (1) Director of Family, Care, Women, and Children, Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas; (2) Coordinator of Child Protection, Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas; (3) Director of Reproductive Health Development, Ministry of Education and Culture/BKKBN; (4) Middle

Population and Family Planning Administrator, Directorate of Adolescent Family Development, Ministry of Education and Culture/BKKBN; (5) Coordinator of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, SUPD IV, Ministry of Home Affairs; and (6) Assistant Deputy for Coordination of Fulfillment of Children's Rights Region II, Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection.

This process is carried out by giving values based on 4 main criteria in policy formulation, namely:

1. **Legality.** An assessment to ensure that the policies adopted do not contradict existing regulations and policies.
2. **Political Acceptability.** An assessment to measure whether the policy to be adopted has the potential to gain support from various stakeholders.
3. **Improvability.** An assessment of whether the policy to be adopted is sufficiently robust and can be implemented or developed to achieve its primary objective.
4. **Administrative Implementation.** The assessment is intended to measure whether policy implementation can be carried out systematically, organized, and measurably.

Each criterion is weighted from 1 to 5. A score of 1 indicates a very low probability, while a score of 5 indicates a very high probability of implementation. In making the decision, the authors involved stakeholders to assess these four policy alternatives. The following is a consolidated assessment of the criteria for the compiled policy alternatives.

Figure 7. Policy Criteria Assessment

Policy Alternatives	Assessment based on criteria				
	<i>Legality</i>	<i>Political Acceptability</i>	<i>Improvability</i>	<i>Administrative Implementation</i>	Total
1) Formulation of asymmetric strategies based on the characteristics and socio-cultural conditions of each	29	28	30	28	115
2) Strengthening reproductive health education through various channels (family, school and community) by taking into account the characteristics of children and the conditions of their living environment ;	29	26	26	29	110
3) Strengthening regulations related to the mandate for referral services for victims of child marriage ;	26	26	28	28	108

4) Integration of child marriage data systems at each regional level ;	26	27	26	28	107
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Source: Bappenas, 2025 – processed by Dit, KPP

The summary results of the assessment collection show that the value given to each alternative based on the criteria is in the range of 4 to 5. This shows that the four proposed alternatives are very important policies to be implemented in the future as a strengthening of policies for preventing and handling child marriage.

Overall, alternative policy 1 has the greatest potential for implementation. This policy, which develops an asymmetric strategy that takes into account the characteristics and socio-cultural conditions of each region, will significantly reduce the disparity in child marriage rates. This policy is highly urgent as a gateway to implementing subsequent policies. In this regard, the mapping and profiling of each region, undertaken as an initial step in implementing this policy, will serve as the basis for implementing various subsequent policies, such as outreach to children experiencing pregnancies or marriages without legal registration.

The categorization that emerged as a result of identifying regional conditions regarding the results of child marriage prevention and handling achievements must be responded to with different strategies. Several elements that can be taken into consideration in carrying out this categorization include: (1) prevalence/number of child marriage cases; (2) number of marriage dispensations requested and granted; (3) Number of pregnancies and births among teenagers or under 19 years old; (4) traditions and culture that are considered to influence the occurrence of child marriage cases; (5) socio-economic conditions, as well as livelihood patterns; (6) school dropout rates; and so on.

In implementing this policy, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) can collaborate with the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas and the Ministry of Education and Culture/BKKBN to compile a child marriage profile by region, utilizing various existing data. To complement the analytical narrative, it is necessary to involve development partners and community organizations that have programs to support the prevention and management of child marriage at the local or field level. Comprehensive data collection and analysis must be conducted regularly at the beginning of the five-year planning document so that they can serve as a basis for determining appropriate strategies and interventions during the five-year medium-term planning period. The results of this asymmetric policy will be evaluated at the end of the planning document's implementation.

CONCLUSION

The decline in child marriage rates in Indonesia over recent years reflects the success of various government and cross-sectoral collaboration programs, with official data showing a reduction from 8,804 underage marriages in 2022 to 4,150 in 2024. However, challenges remain as many early marriages go unregistered, and disparities persist across regions due to social, economic, and cultural differences. The rapid achievement of targets does not necessarily indicate optimal service quality, particularly across the pre-marriage, dispensation, and post-marriage phases. Analysis of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (Stranas PPA) implementation since 2020 suggests that future policy transformation should expand beyond prevention to also address existing child marriages. Recommended policy improvements include developing asymmetric strategies tailored to regional characteristics, strengthening reproductive health education, enhancing regulations on referral services for child marriage victims, and integrating child marriage data systems across regions. Priority

should be given to asymmetric policies that address regional nuances, complemented by widespread reproductive health education to build child resilience and increase awareness among parents and communities about the harms of child marriage. Future research should focus on evaluating the quality and impact of service delivery in preventing and responding to child marriage across diverse regional contexts, as well as exploring effective ways to improve registration and monitoring systems for early marriages to ensure better policy implementation and support for affected children.

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